

Networks of Asylum Support in the UK and USA:

A Handbook of Ideas, Strategies and Best Practice for
Asylum Support Groups in a Challenging Social and
Economic Climate



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Foreword

This report represents the findings of an eighteen month research project that examines the challenges faced by asylum support groups in the United States and the United Kingdom, and different ways of responding to those challenges. The research has been funded by the Economic and Social Research Council of the UK¹. The research has been carried out by four people: Drs Nick Gill, Deirdre Conlon, Ceri Oeppen and Imogen Tyler.

The purpose of this report is to provide information to the asylum support sector by disseminating our findings about the common challenges faced by those working with this vulnerable population in two different national settings, and the strategies being engaged by asylum support organisations to confront these common challenges.

Our research project uncovered a range of organisations that offer practical assistance to asylum seekers in a variety of ways: for example by visiting asylum seekers in detention, helping to prepare their legal cases, providing creative, artistic, spiritual, health-related, political and practical support, advocating on their behalf with authorities and policy makers and by raising the profile of asylum-seekers in news media and other public forums. We began by mapping the kinds of organisations that exist in two national settings—the US and UK—and then used a questionnaire to capture as much information as possible about them. The questionnaire was undertaken by over 130 organisations. We then conducted 35 in-depth interviews with individuals working in asylum support organisations, as well as 3 focus groups. Over the course of collecting the data, the size, scale and diversity of the asylum support sector became apparent. Though there were many differences there was a uniting theme in the data we collected: an enduring sense of injustice at the treatment of asylum seekers and widespread recognition of the need

¹ Grant entitled 'Making asylum seekers legible and visible: An analysis of the dilemmas and mitigating strategies of asylum support groups in the US and UK', reference number: RES-00-22-3928

to do more to change the social, legal and political situations which lead to inequalities and discrimination. Further, all of the organisations we interviewed expressed their desire to persist with difficult support work in the face of deepening economic crises and hardening border-policy contexts, and to find ways of galvanising others to assist this often isolated and marginalised migrant population.

We hope this report makes a contribution to the critical work of the asylum-advocacy sector by sharing ideas and best practice between what are sometimes large national organisations with paid and unpaid workers, but are more often small local and isolated groups of volunteers. We hope this research project will facilitate further collaboration between asylum advocacy groups, and between this sector and academic researchers.

In carrying out this work the research team has been inspired and humbled by the dedication, positive outlook and imaginative determination of the people who work in this sector. We would like to express our thanks to everyone who has participated in the project. Your generosity at a time of acute instability and financial strain is very much appreciated.

It is our hope that each asylum support organisation that comes into contact with this report will come away with at least one good idea. If this happens then we have achieved our primary objective.

Please feel free to contact us to discuss the findings by email, by posting on our blog (www.asylum-network.com) or sending a tweet to [@asylumresearch](https://twitter.com/asylumresearch). This, we hope, is the beginning and not the end of a fruitful engagement between the academic community and migrant support groups.

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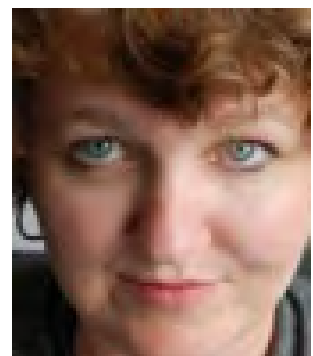
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Contents

Foreword	ii
Contents.....	iv
Glossary of Terms	v
Acknowledgements.....	v
Executive summary	1
Recommendations.....	2
Introduction	3
Why is the work of asylum support groups necessary?.....	3
Project Aims	4
Findings.....	6
Funding	7
Effects on those being supported	7
Effects on staff and volunteers.....	7
Effects on cooperation between organisations.....	7
Effects on strategy and planning.....	7
Connecting across the asylum sector	11
Benefits of Asylum Sector Connections.....	13
Challenges	13
Responding to the need to connect across the asylum sector.....	13
Legal Matters	15
Differences between US and UK responses.....	15
Sources of Frustration, Variability and Inconsistency.....	17
Responses to Legal Difficulties.....	18
Emotional Strain.....	22
How big an issue is emotional strain?.....	22
What are the consequences of emotional strain in the asylum support sector?.....	23
How do organisations respond to emotional strain?	24
Balancing Priorities.....	26
Responses to the challenge of balancing priorities.....	26
Dealing with the News Media	27
New Social Media	29
Conclusion	31
Contacting people quoted in this report.....	31
Archiving.....	31
Staying in Touch.....	31
We need your feedback!	31
Future projects	32
Appendix One : The Questionnaire Survey (US Version).....	33
Appendix Two: The interview Schedule	38
Appendix Three: Survey Methodological Notes.....	40

Glossary of Terms

Due to the fact that the research is international, we include a glossary of terms that are either specific to a single one of our study countries, or are used in different ways in the two countries of interest.

- Asylee** — An individual, non-citizen of a country, who has been granted asylum in that country.
- Affidavits** — A written declaration made under oath before a notary public or other authorized officer.
- Destitute Asylum Seeker** — An asylum seeker who has not got enough money to meet their basic needs such as their need for shelter, food or clothing.
- Notarios** — Individuals and firms offering unscrupulous and ineffective legal advice and ‘immigration consultation’ services to clients, often immigrants from Latin American countries where the term is used to refer to lawyers with specialized legal training but this is not the case in the US.
- Pro Bono** — Literally, ‘*for the public good*’. Professional work undertaken on a voluntary basis or at a reduced fee, often associated with the legal profession in the US.
- Redundancy** — The state or fact of being unemployed because work is no longer offered or considered necessary.
- Refused Asylum Seeker** — An person whose claim for asylum has been turned down.

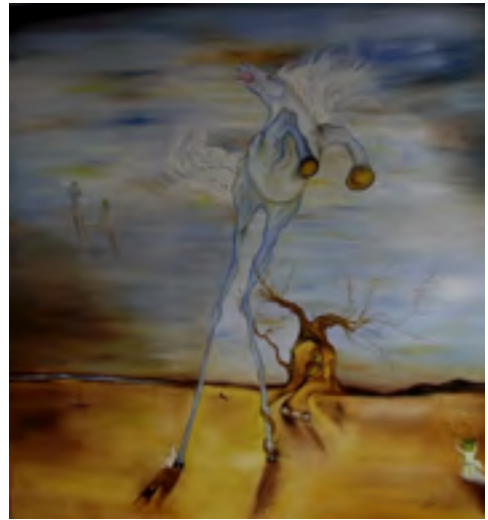
Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the ESRC for financial support (grant no. RES-000-22-3928). We would like to thank the Universities of Exeter (UK), Lancaster (UK), Sussex (UK), Emerson College (US) and Saint Peters’ College (US) for providing support during the research and to Sue Rouillard from the University of Exeter for the typesetting .

Unless otherwise stated the photos used are taken from Music In Detention songwriting workshop by Tom Fairbairn and Arjunan Manuelpillai from Asian Music Circuit at Harmondsworth IRC, 13 May 2010. Copyright Paul Hamlyn Foundation and John Carey. The cover photo is by Deirdre Conlon . Images on pages 1 and 22 are by Aziz Anzabi: web: www.aziz-anzabi.com, email: art.aziz@ymail.com.

The painting of the person’s face on page 2, is the work of a client at Healthright International in New York. For information about the painting / artist, please contact: Lisa Matos, Project Coordinator Human Rights Clinic, Healthright International, 80 Maiden Lane, New York, NY 10038 .

Finally we thank the respondents and organisations whose co-operation made this research possible.



'Beginning and End' Iranian-born, former asylum seeker, and now London-based artist Aziz Anzabi.

Executive summary

Our research highlights seven challenges facing the asylum support sector. The most important in the eyes of our survey respondents are the **funding shortages in the sector**, including shortages in legal aid funding in both countries studied. These shortages have a series of knock-on effects including the loss of highly skilled personnel and an increased sense of competition within the sector for diminishing resources. Alongside shortages in funding, the sector is also experiencing a high degree of feelings of **disconnection from organisations doing similar work** as well as frustration and dismay at the **lack of legal consistency and accountability in the area of asylum law**. Furthermore, many organisations and individuals are struggling with the consequences of **emotional strain** such as secondary trauma that leads to high and costly staff turnover. The asylum support sector is also experiencing **difficulties in balancing short and long term priorities, dealing effectively with news media and using social media technologies in ways that further the work of asylum support organisations**.

Asylum support groups in the US and the UK alike share these challenges. Differences between the two countries include variability in knowledge about and attitudes towards asylum seekers among the general public, differences in the way asylum seekers tend to be depicted in news media and differences in legislation within the two countries. Despite these differences however the commonalities and overlaps in challenges faced by organisations in the US and the UK lead us to conclude that there are merits to dialogue and exchange within the sector and across these distinct country contexts.

Responses to the various challenges varies greatly among participants, sometimes uncovering differences in opinion between our respondents. For example, there is deep ambivalence in the sector with respect to using pro bono (i.e. volunteer) lawyers, the usefulness of observing judges and immigration officers at work and interacting with news media in order to raise the profile of groups or issues. There are also, however, a significant number of areas that respondents agree upon. These allow us to forge a set of overall recommendations.

Recommendations

For the asylum support sector as a whole:

- Closer collaboration with other asylum support organisations is needed and mechanisms to support effective collaborations are necessary. Our research makes clear that effective collaboration is possible in areas such as pooling resources
 - to employ fundraisers,
 - to access expertise in dealing with news media,
 - to use online social media effectively, and
 - to combat emotional strain in the sector.
- There is a need to develop real and virtual meeting spaces where organisations can stay connected, share ideas and effective practices, learn from each other and develop a united voice going forward.
- Many national and local asylum support organisations could be strengthened in their work through international partnerships. By necessity, a lot of work in the sector focuses upon the national level, but this can bind asylum support groups to country-specific ways of doing things and make it difficult to draw upon alternatives from different countries. Sharing ideas and policy objectives across national contexts will allow organisations to challenge national policies more effectively, and we discern particular potential for this strategy in the areas of challenges to the legal timeframes for asylum applications, monitoring immigration hearings, and providing legal representation.

For individual organisations:

- Recognise that emotional strain, including secondary trauma, is a significant and costly issue and that resources invested to ameliorate emotional strain pay off in the long term by helping to reduce staff burnout and turnover. Strategies used by organisations are detailed in this report.
- While already indispensable, volunteers in the student, retired and client/former-client categories can be more supportive in the sector. We recommend that individual organisations consider carefully how to make best use of volunteers.
- Be careful in time spent engaging with news media and developing social media communication platforms unless this meets specific organisational objectives and does not divert resources away from the organisation's core mission.



'Untitled', the work of a client at Healthright International in New York

Introduction

This project has aimed to establish the challenges facing asylum support groups in the US and the UK, and to identify possible responses to these challenges both at the level of organisations and at the sector level. This report represents a summary of our findings that, we hope, will allow good ideas, promising responses and useful tips to be disseminated among a range of asylum support groups that face similar challenges.

The report is written with potential users in the asylum support community in mind. In particular, we are aware that some potential beneficiaries will not count English as their first language, and many are also likely to be short on time. For these reasons the report is structured in an accessible way: each section corresponds with the seven main challenges facing asylum support groups according to our data and each section includes a description of the challenge followed by a set of actual and potential responses to that challenge as well as discussion where appropriate. The main challenges are:

- Funding
- Connecting across the asylum sector
- Legal matters
- Emotional strain
- Balancing priorities
- Dealing with the news media
- New social media

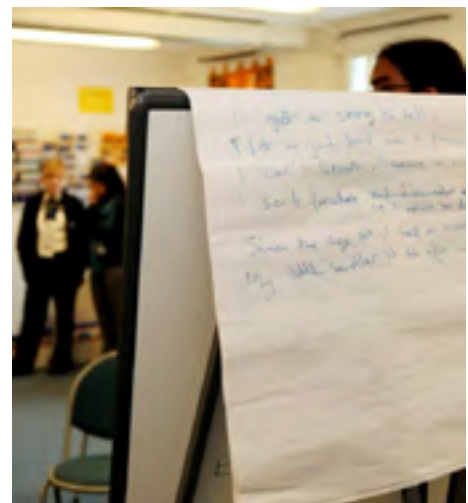
The report is intended for those involved in supporting asylum seekers; therefore we hope that it will be widely read and we invite you to distribute it to others in the asylum support sector.

Why is the work of asylum support groups necessary?

Despite the fact that asylum seeker applications to developed countries have fallen in recent years, the numbers are still significant. The US received over 55 000 applications in 2010, while the UK received over 22 000, placing them second and ninth in the list of application recipients **including** developing country destinations (South Africa was first with over 180 000). Collectively the US and UK therefore received 9.1% of new global asylum applications in 2010.²

In both the US and the UK, asylum seekers face an array of challenges both in their ability to file asylum claims and as concerns the conditions they experience as they await the outcome of claims. These challenges include, but are not limited to:

- Repeated changes in policy landscapes and complex bureaucratic systems, which introduce uncertainty and confusion to the process of claiming asylum.



2 UNHCR (2010) Global Trends 2010, available online at: <http://www.UNHCR.org>

- Frequent requirements that asylum seekers should relocate within their destination countries, often at short notice, both within and outside the detention system. This can sever links to families, friends and lawyers and makes it difficult for asylum seekers to stay in touch with support networks and stymies the provision of much-needed support.
- Restrictions in terms of access to housing, health-care, legal-advice and welfare commonly leading to multiple deprivation in terms of poverty, mental ill-health and physical ill-health.
- In both the US and the UK, detention in privately owned and operated facilities has increased as a way to 'manage' asylum populations. This leads to further isolation of this population from sources of support and advocacy on matters such as detention, legal representation, and welfare support.
- The waiting itself can be extremely prolonged and agonising and often asylum seekers describe this element of the system as the hardest to bear.
- In both the US and the UK, asylum-seekers are unable or face restrictions in being eligible to work, and many are unable to access many forms of education while they undergo the process of asylum claims, reviews, and appeals.

The precarious and challenging conditions faced by many asylum-seekers in their everyday lives makes the work of asylum advocacy and support organisations critical. Asylum support groups can provide friendship and a welcome, as well as much-needed food and shelter, advice including legal advice, a place to meet others in similar positions, places to socialise and worship and access to a range of specialist services, such as health and maternity services, training, volunteer work and education.

Project Aims

Given this context, the project set out to:

- **facilitate dialogue** between different types of asylum support organisations in order to promote best practice and the mitigation of risks;
- provide a means by which asylum support organisations can **share their concerns and their proposed solutions** about the challenges they face;
- **examine** the **different dilemmas** that different asylum support organisations, including advisory/legal, religious-affiliated, health-focused activist groups and campaign/awareness raising groups face either side of the Atlantic.

The report consciously adopts an internationally comparative approach. This is intended to highlight the usefulness of bringing international experiences to bear upon national contexts, especially with regard to the different perspectives that can be offered to national and sub-national policy makers when considering what policies and practices exist in other countries. In designing the research in this way we have been inspired by the effectiveness of the international detention coalition <http://idcoalition.org/cap/>, who have developed alternatives to detention that draw upon international perspectives.

Methodology and characteristics of the data

The project followed a two stage methodology. Firstly, organisations were invited to submit an account of the challenges they are currently facing by completing an online survey. This was circulated widely via regular post and online mailings during late 2010 and early 2011. Sample selection sought to balance groups that are involved in different kinds of support activities, such as faith-based groups, legal-focus, political-advocacy and campaigning. The survey included 26 questions (available in Appendix One) and yielded a set of rich and insightful responses.

Secondly, a representative selection of organisations was invited to take part in interviews either in person or via telephone/Skype. Whereas the first, survey stage of the research focused on establishing key challenges facing asylum support groups in the UK and the US, the second stage placed an emphasis on gathering ideas about how to respond to these challenges. Interview questions invited respondents to reflect upon their successes in order to generate a set of suggestions and recommendations that can strengthen the sector as a whole. The interviews were conducted with an understanding of anonymity so that individuals cannot be identified and, wherever possible, organisations will not be identified in the results. A total of 35 interviews were completed, along with three focus groups conducted in London on the 23rd September 2011 ([see our blog post about this event](#)). The interviews and focus groups were transcribed and have resulted in a wealth of information, ideas and suggestions related to working in and strengthening the asylum support sector.

This report outlines the most commonly identified challenges facing asylum support groups under the seven themes set out in the introduction. Immediately following each challenge is an account and discussion of the range of ideas, responses and suggestions from organisations to address these challenges.

Characteristics of survey respondents:

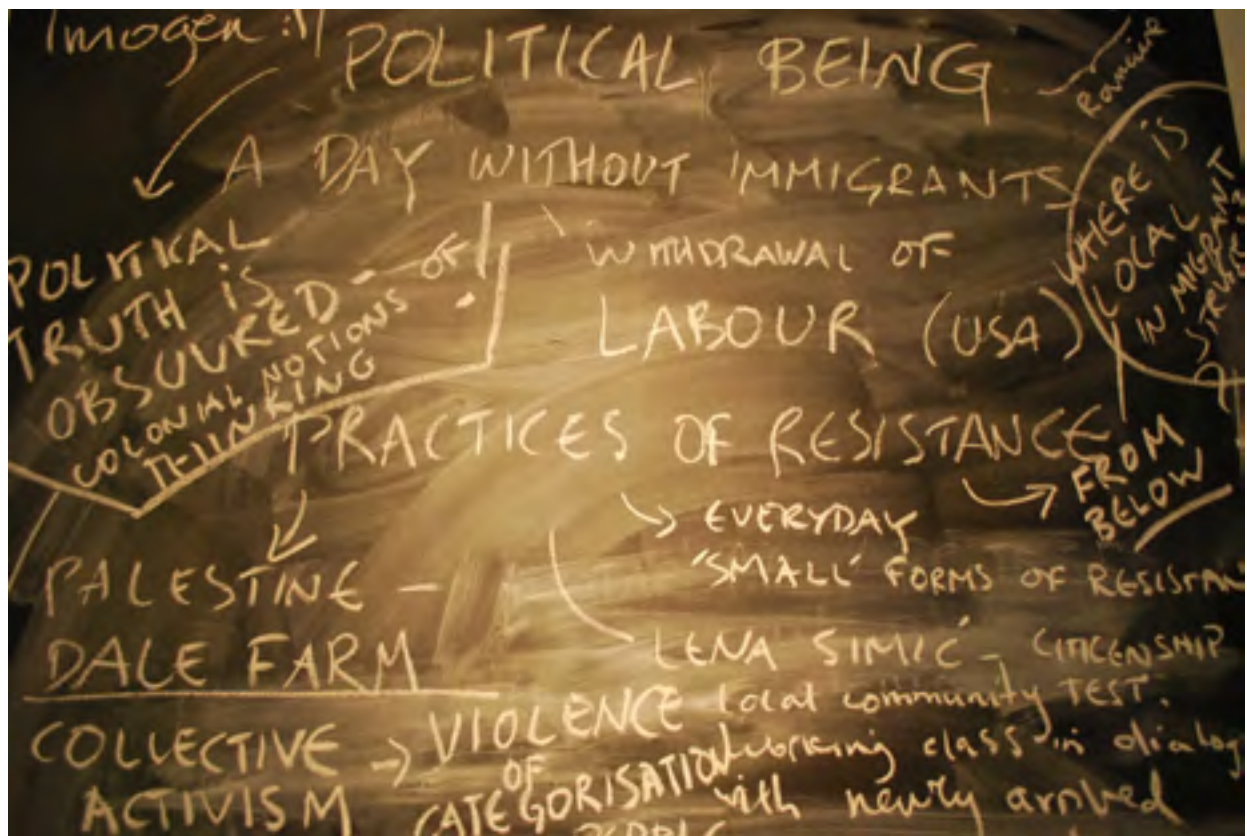
57% of the survey respondents were based in the US and the rest in the UK.

58% of the respondents described their work as involving seeking or providing legal support, 56% described their work as aiming to change government policy, 26% described their work as mainly concerned with visiting those in detention or dispersed housing, 59% stated that the provision of food, medical care or other services was part of their work, 28% stated that raising the profile of asylum seekers described their work, 50% stated that allowing asylum seekers to express themselves creatively was involved in their work, and 32% stated that campaigning was involved in their work.

52% of the organisations surveyed employed fewer than 10 people.

While only 20% stated that they were politically motivated, 30% were motivated by faith, 30% by a shared identity with asylum seekers, and 88% by a concern for human rights.

Findings



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Funding

The survey findings indicate that cuts to funding are the most significant challenge facing asylum support groups. Across the board, responses referred to lack of funding available and concerns about future funding drying up. A particular problem was the shortage of funds for direct legal representation, which was an acute problem outlined by many of our interviewees and survey respondents from both countries³.

As well as the impact of lack of, or cuts in, funding for the direct costs of projects respondents outlined what they saw as knock-on effects of changes in funding.

Effects on those being supported

- The fact that the funding cuts have **simultaneously** increased the needs of the vulnerable and reduced the ability of organisations to respond to those needs has amplified the damage that reductions in funding have generated.

Effects on staff and volunteers

- Staff pay freezes.
- The loss of skilled staff from the sector.
- Concern that new staff and volunteers won't be available to replace staff nearing the age of retirement.

Effects on cooperation between organisations

The competition between organisations for scarce funds. As one UK organisation noted, 'the general funding climate has become more competitive... it feels like we're all chasing the same pot of money' (UK12).

Even where funding is relatively secure, the effect of funding cuts on partner organisations and within state welfare systems in general, has repercussions across the sector.



Effects on strategy and planning

- The inconsistency of funding.
- The speed of the cuts. As a UK organisation noted 'we've been through a firestorm... 50% cuts in three months is horrendous' (UK10).
- The way that cuts negatively impact upon innovation and change in the sector. There is a sense of protecting core services rather than developing new approaches to support and advocacy.
- Concern that new staff won't be available to replace staff nearing retirement age.

³ In the UK, recent plans to remove £315m (\$485.1m) from the annual £2.2bn (\$3.388bn) spent on legal aid attracted great controversy as they proceeded through parliament. While they do not explicitly include cuts to asylum seekers' legal aid, their effects have been keenly felt because many firms that provide legal support for asylum seekers rely upon other areas of immigration law, which are subject to cuts, in order to subsidise their asylum work. Additionally, government finance for asylum representation has been constrained by recent legislation. In October 2007 asylum representation became subject to fixed fee payments, rather than hourly payments. This meant that a law firm received £495 (\$762.30) to represent an asylum seeker in court, independent of case complexity, creating an incentive to either provide poor quality support, opt out of this area of law (as many have) or to incur losses providing good legal aid. The closure of the two largest organisations providing legal aid to asylum seekers reflected the pressure that this legislation produced. Refugee and Migrant Justice (RMJ) and the Immigration Advisory Service (IAS) became subject to fixed fee legislation in April 2009: RMJ closed later that same year and the IAS went into administration in July 2011.

Faced with this thicket of fundamental challenges to the financial stability of the sector, there are absolutely no easy answers to these issues. We asked our interview respondents how they have responded to the austere financial landscape, whether they have any advice for organisations that are also struggling with the reductions in funding, and whether there are more general changes that could be implemented in order to ease the financial pressure over organisations operating in the asylum support sector. There is a considerable range of responses. Some organisations try to look on the bright side of funding cuts, others are sceptical that any appropriate response is available.

Putting a Brave Face on It

A variety of organisations note some potential upsides to come out of the overall dire financial situation. For example, some respondents point out that a general climate of austerity measures might allow for pressure on governments to reign in their spending on detention and expensive border controls.

Other groups point out that the worsening situation of asylum seekers has paradoxically helped them to attain more sponsorship because the poverty and destitution faced by asylum seekers has become so pronounced that they have become a powerful fundraising aide. Other organisations note that the shortage of financial funds has meant that support groups have to find common ground and work together more closely. As one UK group noted: 'Oddly enough now there is no money, we're finding less to argue about' (UK25). Still other respondents note the way in which the reduction in funding has forced them to re-focus and re-consider what their specialist goals and strengths are and to concentrate on those.

Responses to the Funding Shortages

If a range of organisations argue that sometimes unexpected opportunities have emerged from the shortage of funds, other interviewees offered at least some advice for struggling groups:

- **Focus on the organisation's core mission.** This can reduce expenditure and also reduce competition with other groups.
- **'Sell Yourself'.** Although some organisations shy away from corporate messaging, one or two interviewees offered insightful ways in which to 'market' the organisation to attract volunteers and/or sponsors (see Box 1).
- **Generate income wherever possible.** Our respondents note that many non-profit organisations now have to operate like for-profits. Thinking carefully about charging for particular services where users might be able to pay is an important strategy for some of our interviewees. Other organisations find that the asylum seeker and refugee communities they are in contact with often have time on their hands, by virtue of the tortuously slow process of decision making in both countries, and are often highly

1 'I think it is important to sell yourselves very strongly almost like a sales position in a sense.

So if I try to get people to participate in a project I give a sales pitch over the phone and I like reward people for being in the project. It can be something as simple as publishing their story very briefly in the newsletter, calling them to thank them, emailing them to thank them, counselling them when they are done.

Letting them know that they are valued even in the smallest way is [very good for maintaining relationships]' (US45)

skilled. By doing something productive and profitable, self-worth and sense of belonging is improved. One group we interviewed, for example, supports their clients in the making of jewellery, providing a meeting room and some training. Another group recognised that their client group, largely from Ethiopia and Eritrea, were skilled beekeepers, and worked with them to set up an environmentally friendly, profitable line in beekeeping.

- **Consider investing in a paid fundraiser.** This might seem like a surprising strategy, but those who have taken this route find it extremely beneficial and well worth the investment. One group contracted external consultants to assess the profile of external sponsors – individuals and groups – that might support their work in the future. This respondent notes there is a ‘shift in wealth from public into private hands’ and that ‘the future must lie in sympathetic major donors’ (UK6). Even if groups are too small to invest in a fundraiser on their own, they might be able to afford a fundraiser if they shared the post with other organisations that they work with.
- **Become a Facilitator.** One of our interviewees makes a compelling case for stepping back from doing front-line work, towards taking on the role of facilitator. For them this means making connections, encouraging creativity and self-sufficiency, providing training and advice, and providing the conditions for local – perhaps refugee or asylum seeker led - partnerships and activities to flourish (see Box 2).
- **Collaborate with other organisations.** Various respondents mention the usefulness of collaborating with other organisations, sometimes in the form of joint bids for scarce resources and sometimes in the form of shared service provision. This is not, however, to paint a completely rosy picture of collaboration as a strategic response to the financial stresses that organisations are often under. Some interviewees express reservations about collaboration, or tips about how to go into a collaboration with ‘eyes wide open’. For example:
 - It is important that any organisation considering collaboration makes sure they are collaborating with a partner who has equal or greater level of data protection and commitment to the confidentiality of client cases. This often means agreeing on stated terms regarding confidentiality before entering into any collaboration, especially with publicly funded bodies.
 - It is also important to make sure that the terms of a collaborating agreement are favourable to both parties. As one US interviewee notes, ‘What’s most important is that there is a budget line for each organization, so that it’s not just in name. Otherwise, the larger organization can and does take the money and the smaller organizations don’t see any of it’ (US55).
- **Make use of the volunteer workforce.** The *most commonly cited response to the financial pressure that organisations confront* is tapping into volunteers as a resource. This is a complex area with plenty of disagreement among respondents. On the one

2 We need to be relaxed about the owning it, taking it, running it, ... we’ve fundamentally changed from a very directed style of campaigning to one which is: here’s the resources, here’s the information, here’s some ideas, go off and do it ...

We should be an encourager, we should be a facilitator, we should be a ‘yes you can do that’ (UK10)

hand, many groups find that volunteers are very helpful, especially where they bring specific skills to organisations. For example, legal, language and research skills are often highly valued.

However, using volunteers is by no means a straight-forward solution to the issue of funding shortages. Some of our respondents express scepticism over the strategy of using volunteers, pointing out the difficulty of managing 'too many' volunteers, losing control of volunteers because organisations are not formally in charge of them, and appointing volunteers lacking in skills who unintentionally hold up operations (see Box 3).

One response to the challenges associated with managing volunteers lies with being attentive to the needs, aspirations and potential of particular volunteer groups. Our interviewees identify at least three separate volunteer groups that provide support in various ways, and each is seen as possessing specific characteristics.

- **Students.** 'They're eager and they're young and they're happy' (US139). They tend to want to boost their resumes and CVs and can be especially good in terms of providing up-beat emotional and friendship support. They often have a need to move on relatively quickly after the end of a college course, however, and may be lacking in certain key skills.
- **Retired people.** This group is often portrayed as the most skilled and as having the most time. They are often able to offer long periods of service. On the other hand, this group may pine for relative peace and quiet, as one interviewee notes 'some people want their retirement back!' (US18), indicating the need to be sensitive to volunteers needs and aspirations as well.
- **Current and Ex-Clients** including asylum seekers and refugees. Some organisations reported that their clients, who are often very skilled and in possession of specific knowledge such as relevant language skills, were indispensable volunteers at their organisations. This can be a win-win situation if volunteers also acquire skills. Again, however, this group needs careful support, especially with respect to secondary trauma associated with the work they do (see the section on emotional strain below).

Overall, making use of volunteer resources is the most widely discussed response to the financial pressure in the sector. It is clear from our results that this response is by no means straight-forward and requires careful planning and thought.

3 'We could fill our rooms with volunteers, people would love to come and do things for us but ... they take an awful lot of money if you don't get what you want out of it ... you have invested time recruiting them and they are gone within a month.

No we want people that know what they are coming for, know why they are here. ...

Over the years I have become very cautious about responding to offers of help. Better to pay generally because you have got more control over it' (UK6).

Connecting across the asylum sector

Like many non-profit organisations, groups working in the asylum sector feel that they are disconnected or work in relative isolation from other groups engaged in similar work. Access to networks in order to connect with similar kinds of organisations and to exchange information, ideas and strategies are seen as crucial resources for success in the asylum support community. There is a strong feeling that an online space with groups doing similar work would be beneficial, not only as a way to connect but also to facilitate the development of an archive of institutional knowledge.

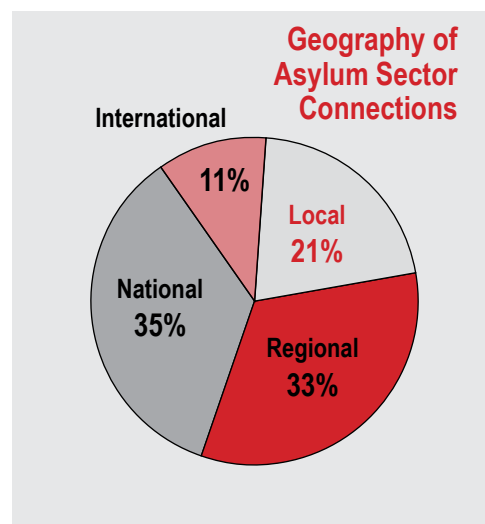
In order to explore the nature of the networks that already exist between groups, we asked survey respondents to identify up to four organisations they work with and to describe the nature of the connection. From this we get a sense of the geography of networks within the sector.

In both the US and UK, groups work with and look most to groups at the **regional**⁴ or **national** scale (see chart). The ability to connect regionally is particularly important when asylum seekers are ‘dispersed’ by authorities, moved from one detention center to another, or released from detention.

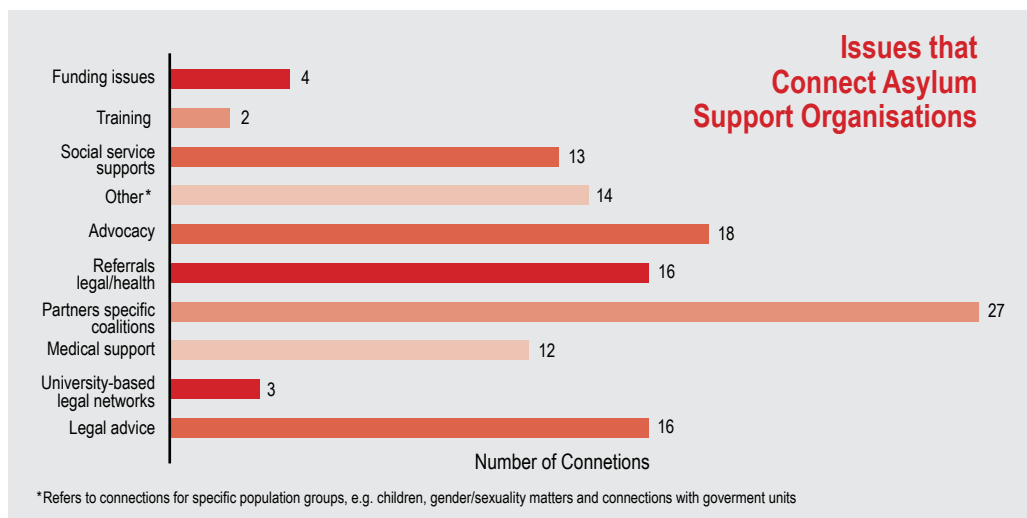
Connections between **local** and **national** organisations are crucial because, as one interviewee from a national support group notes: “it’s hard for our organization to see what it looks like on the ground. But we also have much more of an inside voice and recognition within the federal government, and so we’re able to advocate. And then the local organizations also recognize that they have such great information and experience because they’re working so much more closely with the clients themselves and with the impacted population. [So, we] recognize where I sit versus where the people on the ground sit and recognizing the strengths and the barriers to both of those positions” (134US).

It is encouraging to note that many groups already have established connections; a number of organisations are **linked to other groups as part of a larger umbrella organization** that funds programs and activities, as well as providing other resources. Others form **working group coalitions that are issue specific** and, at times, short term; these include developing a coordinated response to recent funding cuts in the UK, responding to government policies such as detention, coordinating around benefits issues, and preparing funding bids.

We do note, however, the degree to which connections follow national or sub-national boundaries. Only 11% of connections could be considered international and our respondents themselves recognise this as an unsatisfactory situation. Given



⁴ We take regional to mean a scale between the local and the national.



that it is national governments who issue and administer asylum law, the national or sub-national focus of many asylum support groups misses the opportunity to feed international experiences into their interactions with their governments. This risks reproducing the status quo, confirming the dominance of national governments in the area of asylum policy and depriving national, regional and local policy makers of an international perspective. Our respondents – even local groups - consequently felt that there was much potential for co-ordinated international approaches to the issues they face, with a variety citing the International Detention Coalition <http://idcoalition.org/cap/> as a strong example of a movement that can impact upon national practices by offering alternatives to detention that draw upon international experiences.

In general, organisations tend to come together and connect on specific issues related to their practice. The chart above shows the range of issues that connect organisations. After coalitions on specific issues—these are often short-term—connections focused on advocacy, legal matters, medical supports, and referrals for legal representation or health care occur most often.

These findings indicate a robust demand for linkage among organisations. As one UK interviewee notes: “Increasingly voluntary organisations and NGOs in the asylum field, are actually recognising they have to work together [...] just from practical things, there’s nobody who can do everything in the asylum sector, so we must work with a vast range of partners really” (UK 4). The findings serve to amplify recent reports highlighting the paucity of adequate legal representation for migrants generally⁵ including asylum seekers in the US, with similar issues unfolding rapidly in the UK, due, in large measure, to recent funding cuts. As such, they are indicative of the pressures groups contend with to continue delivering services and meeting the needs of their clients, in spite of budget cutbacks. These findings also point to a need to **develop platforms that facilitate successful network building and productive coalitions**. To this end, we asked interviewees to share their experiences and advice on establishing and maintaining connections. Before turning to these suggestions, we highlight some of the **benefits** of making connections.

5 See Semple, K. (2011) In a study, judges express a bleak view of lawyers representing immigrants, *New York Times*, December 19, p. A24.

Benefits of Asylum Sector Connections

Many of the connections that organisations establish are fruitful and productive. A number of our interviewees outline the importance of collaborating in order to be able to respond to sudden increases in the demand for services. Good collaborators are reliable, flexible and reciprocal. Being able to turn to other groups at short notice is often key to keeping an organization running efficiently, maintaining momentum, and keeping clients' cases moving forward. Some groups also note that working with collaborators helps to demonstrate the need for a specific organisation, shows effective results, and is helpful for raising funding. Box 4 highlights the reciprocal benefits of connections, by highlighting how organisations such as legal representation groups and detention visitors can work with advocacy groups that can serve as a voice-piece for their concerns.

Challenges

Several interviewees note that there are challenges involved too. One interviewee observes: "It requires really intensive work I think. Like any kind of friendship, you have to keep ringing people up and finding out how they're going" (UK7). Looking at connections focused on legal matters as an example of this, there is a continuous need to devote time and energy to building and maintaining connections with the legal community. Coinciding with this is a sense that information gets lost and, as one respondent notes: the wheel is being reinvented repeatedly. In sum, time, which is a scarce resource, and loss of valuable information are recurrent frustrations associated with connecting across the asylum sector.

Lastly, some groups note the potential for problems when boundaries are crossed. For example, when multiple agencies are involved in providing client services, there are times when advice or information provided by one agency is at odds with that of another. Thus, the need to establish open lines of communication as well as clear boundaries around each organisation's role are important to fostering successful connections.

Responding to the need to connect across the asylum sector

In the light of these potential benefits and challenges our respondents offered a series of tips about how to make the most of an organisation's connections:

- **Recognise distinct positions and roles.** Interviewees repeatedly note the importance of being respectful of the varying positions and approaches that organisations have (see Box 5). Not only does this help to establish

4 "There are situations in which, because [law firms] are representing an individual, they cannot say something.

So for example they need to stay in the good graces of the [government representative] at the end of the day... they need their clients not to be punished for the actions that they are doing.

So sometimes it's convenient for them to say 'well we can't say this but if you say it that would be wonderful' so they can tell us things that we can take back to headquarters and say 'well look, that field officer is doing something very wrong and the people there are afraid to say anything so you need to step in', whereas they may not be able to say that" (40US).

5 Improving conditions and ending detention are not mutually exclusive, it's advocating for both (40US)

positive relationships, it also enables **turn-taking** where different groups can take the lead with initiatives to address specific issues in individual areas of expertise.

- **Identify a clear sense of direction.** Another suggestion involves devoting time, at the outset, to clearly articulating goals, how to get there, and what each group brings to the table and potentially gains in the process. One respondent describes it as “creating a win-win situation about what you’re trying to achieve” (UK12). This involves leadership, in addition to being willing to hand over leadership in accordance with distinct roles.
- **Regular meetings are key.** Groups that meet regularly, ideally face-to-face but increasingly by using free web-based software such as Skype, are better able to open and maintain lines of communication. Even when this involves disagreement, it’s beneficial to tap into other groups’ strengths and needs, to share information and updates, and to set common agendas.
- **An online meeting space for organisations in the asylum sector.** Several interviewees working across a range of areas in the sector suggest that an online ‘meeting space’ would be of considerable value in staying connected. Among the potential uses of such a forum are: as a venue for non-profits and pro bono legal representatives to connect, as a central storage space for updates in case law as well as immigration policies, as a space where different service providers can exchange knowledge or potentially make referrals, and where organisations that need assistance with various projects can solicit experts as well as volunteers. Some interviewees note that user-friendly design as well as having the capacity to update such a forum regularly pose considerable challenges for this idea but nonetheless, the prospect and potential appeals to many organisations.

Legal Matters

Our results include the views of representatives of a range of different groups involved in the legal side of advocating for asylum seekers. Some groups charge legal service fees, others are voluntary and/or charitable, and others combine a mixture of different approaches and funding sources. Some groups specialise in the provision of direct representation in court, while others focus on securing legal or medical experts to improve cases or provide a range of orientation services that enable asylum seekers to navigate part or all of the legal process more effectively on their own. In all, 58% of our respondents described their work as focussed upon legal aspects of asylum support and advocacy. In this section we detail the various strains that these legal providers are experiencing, and go on to explore the pros and cons of a variety of responses to these pressures.

US-based respondents were by far the more vocal in outlining the shortcomings of the US-immigration legal system. UK-based survey respondents raised issues around access to and supply of high-quality legal representation for asylum seekers (UK5, UK7, UK8); this is understandable due to the contraction in legal aid funding as a result of legislative changes in the UK (see Footnote Three). In the US, non-citizens are ineligible for government funded, court-appointed legal representation and thus asylum seekers who are represented in immigration court must rely on pro-bono attorneys, non-profit legal support organisations, law school clinics, or must pay for their own private legal representatives.⁶ In addition to concerns about the quality and dearth of legal representation for asylum seekers, US-based groups express concerns about a lack of consistency in immigration courts and legal procedures, variability in judges' conduct and decision making, and a lack of cultural awareness or understanding about the possible effects of an asylum seeker's trauma in immigration hearings (115US, 5US, 10US, 40US). Because they were most vocal on these matters, the over-whelming majority of interview material draws from the US-based interviews. Before exploring this data in detail, it is worth reflecting on why the US-based respondents highlight legal issues more.

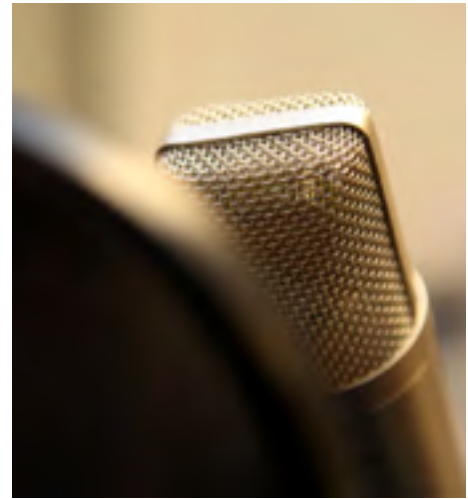
Differences between US and UK responses

First, it is surprising that the UK respondents do not talk more about the requirements to register claims for asylum within a specified time period. Among US-based respondents this issue arises repeatedly with reference to the one-year bar that requires asylum seekers to make a claim for asylum within one year of entering the country. Coupled with this, US groups contend with an 'asylum clock', which stops and starts in somewhat capricious fashion at an individual judge's discretion rather than in accordance with clear guidelines. This is problematic because the length of time an asylum seeker waits for their case to be heard is used in determining employment eligibility and given that asylum seekers do not receive any government assistance the pressure to provide for themselves is great.⁷ There is outrage among asylum support groups in the US about the arbitrary nature of the timing of the 'one-year bar' requirement and about the 'asylum clock' process.

⁶ A recent report finds in immigration cases—for non-citizens including asylum seekers—that were heard in New York immigration courts between 2005 and 2010, 27% of non-detained clients had no legal representation and 60% of detained individuals were without legal representation (see The New York Immigrant Representation Study, Accessing Justice: The Availability and Adequacy of Immigration Counsel in Immigration Proceedings, 33 Cardozo Law Review, 357 (Dec 2011).

⁷ When an asylum seeker waits more than 150 days from the time of application without a hearing on their claim they should become eligible to apply for employment authorization.

In contrast to this, in the UK, asylum seekers are required to submit asylum claims ‘as soon as reasonably practicable’, which has been interpreted as within three working days. The differences between the UK and US might be explained by the **differing histories of activism around asylum** in the two countries. It used to be the case that if asylum seekers did not apply for asylum within three working days in the UK then they were automatically refused support under Section 55 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act (2002). Following a protracted legal battle that drew substantially upon the resources of the asylum support and activist sector in the UK, a High Court Judge ruled that this was unlawfully denying humanitarian help to those who may need it. Therefore, since June 2004, asylum seekers who apply for support after three working days but *who do not have alternative means of support* can no longer be refused. In other words, the ‘**as soon as reasonably practicable**’ clause is still in use, but is **subject to the condition that asylum seekers must not face destitution as a result of its implementation**. This subtle alteration to the law reflects a significant victory for the asylum support sector in the UK. Given this victory however, some of the respondents may feel that the issue is now less pressing than in the past.



In contrast, until relatively recently, US-based advocates have viewed matters of timing as being less amenable to contestation or change. The recent filing of a class action suit against the US Citizenship and Immigration Service and Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) that challenges asylum clock policies and practices, indicates a shift in the US context.⁸ As a result, dialogue between advocacy groups in the US and UK on these matters and on the possibility of transferring to the US successful strategies used by UK-groups is worthwhile.

Second, the lack of discussion of the variability of asylum judgements in the UK may result from the lack of data that is more commonly available on this issue. In the US, the use of freedom of information requests may be more common than in the UK. In addition, by accessing data under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), organisations such as Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) are able to make available information such as the percentage judgements handed down by judges and studies of the variability of asylum determinations at different stages in the process have revealed significant variation across judges, courts and regions⁹. In the UK the legal culture is more protective of data and many judges and legal elites do not feel that they should be directly accountable to the public or subject to the public’s scrutiny in order to maintain their impartiality. For this reason, accessing data on individual and court decisions is not easy and accessing data via freedom of information requests is a cumbersome and inefficient way to collect information. It may be that the relative lack of criticism of legal processes among our UK-based respondents results from the lack of data they have, or is traceable to a more opaque legal culture.

⁸ For information on the Legal Action Center’s class action suit see <http://www.legalactioncenter.org/litigation/asylum-clock>

⁹ See ‘Refugee Routlette: Disparities in Asylum Adjudication and Proposals for Reform’ by Jaya Ramji-Nogales, Andrew Schoenholtz and Philip Schrag (2009) New York University Press.

Sources of Frustration, Variability and Inconsistency

Bearing these differences between the US and the UK in mind, our US-based respondents identify a series of sources of frustration inherent in the US legal asylum system. Interviewees discuss delays in court hearings as being very stressful and frustrating for applicants, for example, and relate these delays to poor resources for courts. Others identify the role of ill-informed legal advisors—often referred to as ‘notarios’ who are not familiar with the US legal system.

The most commonly cited concern, however, is variability and inconsistency in legal judgements, which our interviewees generally trace to two sources: differences between individual judges, and differences in legal processes across courts. In terms of differences between individual judges, there are concerns that some judges do not apply the law correctly and make judgements on the basis of their gut instincts rather than upon the facts of the case. Respondents discuss disturbing practices among judges who shout, bang files, and allow very little time for questions. These behaviours constitute a particular concern because judges in the US have a high level of discretion over important elements of judicial procedure, such as whether or not to accept written medical evaluations or require that medical professionals come in person to the court to give evidence rather than giving evidence remotely via videolink or telephone. This gives rise to the impression that ‘there’s a good judge to get and a bad judge to get’ (139US) and that attorneys have to ‘play along with whatever the new set of rules are’ (139US).

Alongside differences in the temperaments of judges themselves, a second source of variability and inconsistency concerns differences in legal processes across courts. One respondent speculated that the larger courts tended to be ones in which judges would provide more checks and balances on each others’ outlooks, outlining how the ‘larger mix’ and ‘more varied political views’ among judges in the larger courts means that ‘they sort of moderate each other a little’ (45US). This relates to concerns that different field offices have different interpretations of rules and laws, and even that local and regional capacity to detain influences legal decisions, including the decision to detain. Other respondents recognise the big difference that videolinking of cases can make, when either the judge or the applicant appears in the court via a television screen rather than in person. While recognising that video-linking can cut costs, a series of US-based respondents outlined their scepticism over the use of videolinks in court rather than having the client, the judge and the lawyer all in the same room (see Box 6 and the sub-section below entitled ‘video-linking’).

These and other differences in process make some of our respondents steer clear of giving a poor assessment of individual judges for the inconsistencies in decisions. Some point out that many judges are trying to do the best job they can under extreme pressure, and detail the ‘hard and stressful’ conditions, the fact that many ‘have to rush through cases they don’t want to rush through’ and that many find the job a difficult one to handle emotionally and ‘have their own internal struggles’. Instead, these respondents point to immigration courts, in comparison to other types of courts in the US, as somewhat ‘sloppy’, ‘lackadaisical’, ‘inept’ and often woefully underfunded.

6 Hearings on video is a big problem for many, many reasons including language access ...

I mean it’s just not the same to understand somebody over a phone especially when you already have a language issue and cultural issues. (40US).

Responses to Legal Difficulties

In terms of responses to both judge and court level inconsistencies, our interviewees outlined a variety of potential strategies. None of these responses are perfect, and under each heading we outline some of the pros and cons of each response.

- **Orientation Programmes** In light of the high number of asylum seekers who have no legal representation, these programmes involve training asylum seekers to be better prepared for the legal system. It may involve giving individuals the tools and information they need in order to make their own cases for asylum, bail or to appeal their initial case. Or it may simply involve informing them more broadly about the things they can expect during the legal process as well as some of the things that are (and are not) a good idea to say and do.

There are plenty of variations on how orientation programmes can be organised. Some groups rely on students, interns, and recent law school graduates to deliver training sessions, others have prepared leaflets and manuals in a variety of languages that can be distributed within detention centers and that applicants can take with them when they move.

Some respondents voice a range of reservations about these programmes. One argued that immigration law is too complex to be handled by a non-expert and also warned that orientation programmes can relieve the responsibility of authorities to provide better legal services (see Box 7). Others point out that immigration applicants that represent themselves or who are unrepresented in immigration hearings tend not to win.¹⁰

Advocates of these programmes, however, generally recognise themselves that they are a second-best solution in the absence of direct legal representation. Accepting that they are not perfect, they outline the benefits in terms of letting applicants know what is possible under current law and avoiding a situation in which they suffer from false hope.

- **Court Observation Programmes.** Similar levels of disagreement surround court observation programmes, whereby members of the public organise themselves in order to systematically observe court cases from the public area of the courts. This is so that the judges and clerks

7 You know, there's a saying in English "a lawyer who represents himself has a fool for a client". I don't know why we think that that axiom doesn't apply in immigration.

You cannot represent yourself. The law is counter-intuitive, it's complicated, the procedure is Byzantine and the idea that [you can] just tell people what their rights are and somehow they can do something with that information is a myth.

And the danger of promulgating that myth is that funders love to hear it, and they think, "Oh, that's fine. We'll just fund a few people to go to the gaols and tell everybody, 'you can apply for this, you can apply for that'... (US5).



¹⁰ According to The New York Immigrant Representation Study (see note 3) in persecution cases where the asylum seeker had a legal representative, a successful outcome was granted in 84% of cases whereas only 21% of cases were successful for individuals without legal representation.

‘know you’re there, that you care about those people and that you’re seeing what’s going on’ (125US). Some of our interviewees who run court observation programmes remark that they have seen marked improvements in the relationship between judges, lawyers and applicants, a generally less hostile atmosphere in the court, and fewer instances of intimidating behaviour on the part of judges. Some of these initiatives have become large scale, drawing in student volunteers from nearby universities to take part.

Critics of these programmes argue that there is some risk to having an observer present as it may provoke backlash from the judge, although no examples of this having happened were given. Others have reservations about whether the observations really target the root causes of the problems which they see as financial and systemic in nature. Others express scepticism over the effect observations are likely to have, claiming that judges do not embarrass easily.

Advocates of the observation programmes, however, are passionately convinced that it makes a difference. As one interviewee notes: ‘If nothing else at least they know they’re being watched. At least there’s the odd chance that there might be a monitor in the court room. I [think] that, it [has], definitely ..., a good effect on the judgement’ (41US).

- **Video-linking.** One of our interviewees represented an organisation that spends a lot of time coordinating expert witnesses, such as doctors and psychologists, who give evidence in support of asylum cases. In many cases expert testimony has a positive impact upon the success rate of cases. They outline the usefulness of having video-linking to allow expert witnesses to give evidence to a court as it might mean that expert witnesses do not have to travel to the hearing, and therefore do not have to give up sometimes whole days of their time.

Despite some cost-saving advantages, however, our interviewees voiced a barrage of reservations about the introduction of video-linking for immigration cases:

- It is very difficult for lawyers to communicate with video-linked clients if there is a need to have private conferencing while the case is being heard.
- Opportunities for the lawyer and the client to discuss their approach before the case is heard are often curtailed.
- There are often technical glitches with equipment.
- It’s hard to hear sometimes, which causes frustration among the judges.
- It can compound language and cultural differences (see Box 6).
- When an interpreter is also involved this can make it even more difficult for the applicant to provide strong testimony.

While our UK-based respondents did not discuss video-conferencing explicitly, the US comments on this issue corroborate previous UK research on the disadvantages of using video-linking for immigration bail hearings. In their study of 114 bail applicants (around 2/3s of which were video-linked) the *Campaign to Close Campsfield*, an anti-deportation and anti-detention pressure group, reported a catalogue of technical errors, time pressures due to the peculiarities of contracts, and human error associated with video-linking. Bail for Immigration Detainees (2010), a charity, also conducted research into immigration bail hearings which raised concerns about the lack of preparation time before video-linking, and high degrees of confusion among

8 We're against [pro bono lawyers doing immigration cases]. It is very nice of the corporate bar to take on a few cases... but they only take a handful, they are not the solution to the problem, and yet funders, and also to some extent the federal judiciary, perceive that as an untapped resource.

There's a lot of energy put into urging the corporate law firms, the Wall Street law firms, to take more cases.

Now they love to take, like, one case a year because their associates love it, it's fun, it's a lot more interesting than somebody's stock filing, you know, but they can't meet the need. There's a huge amount of people to be served and if you do asylum cases regularly, [you] understand the types of threats and the issues that come up in these cases.

Whereas the corporate law firm comes in and they'll spend a zillion hours on one case and do a good job but it isn't the solution to the lack of representation. Whereas all the funders want to fund pro-bono co-ordinators. They don't want to fund direct legal services, direct salaries for lawyers.

And we've a lot of kids coming out of law school that would love to do this work and we can't hire 'em. It's a real class bias because you would not say to [a large multinational company], "Oh, use a pro-bono lawyer from the legal aid community to do your taxes". Well, why do they think that poor people's immigration problems are so simple that any old volunteer, that's never done one in his life, should do it?

This area of the law is just as complicated as any kind of tax law or securities law, or financial law and it needs experts (5US).

applicants about its significance. This led both groups to voice grave concerns about whether video-linking was detrimental to a just legal process¹¹.

We found only one interviewee in favour of video-linking. They state that the technology had considerably improved, and argued that if clients are properly prepared it can be less stressful than a court appearance.

- **Pro Bono Lawyers.** There is a tradition in the US of successful private lawyers doing socially worthwhile law alongside their usual professional pursuits. This culture is not as widespread in the UK. Our respondents discuss the ways in which this tradition allows some respondents to benefit from some very high quality lawyers. This can have advantages for the large corporate firms that the lawyers usually work for, and can also provide a welcome change for the lawyers themselves. However, those

¹¹ Campaign to Close Campsfield (2011) *Immigration Bail Hearings: A Travesty of Justice? Observations from the Public Gallery* <http://closecampsfield.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/ccc-bop-report-low-res.pdf>
Bail for Immigration Detainees and the Refugee Council (2008) Immigration bail hearings by video link: a monitoring exercise by Bail for Immigration Detainees and the Refugee Council <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/OneStopCMS/Core/CrawlerResourceServer.aspx?resource=A9E70BD8-C72A-4013-A31C-7247FADAFD2C&mode=link&guid=fe44150bf7e940af87ea01b9c60cf0b5>

engaged in legal advocacy for their clients identify the scarcity of pro bono hours as a concern. Further, pro-bono work can present specific difficulties.

One of our respondents reported poor relationships between clients and pro bono lawyers, citing the ‘level of resentment’ that they carry when they agree to do something for free, even if it is for noble reasons (15US). Another of our interviewees, quoted in Box 8 was unequivocal in voicing the concern that pro bono work does not address the root causes of immigrant’s legal problems.

- **Allowing law students to take on parts of the legal work.** Various respondents describe the ways law students can help with preparing cases, preparing clients, doing research for cases and determining whether a case might have grounds for appeal or a new legal angle. Students often benefit from this experience, and although there needs to be careful monitoring of the quality of their work and the confidentiality with which they treat the cases that they handle, this response is generally seen as positive because it can save lawyers’ time and/or allow them to take on more cases (80US).

- **Disclosure of judges’ statistics and publication of cases.**

As noted, some US-based groups have had success gaining access to information about the rates at which courts and/or judges allow cases. One of our respondents outlines the advantages of such disclosure, which include creating the conditions under which judges themselves can talk to each other about the differences in their decisions (since they are also more knowledgeable about their own rates), which may very well lead to more consistency (US136). The same respondent makes the case that the board of immigration appeals, which has the power to publish cases for the purposes of improving consistency across the whole immigration legal system, should considerably increase the number of cases it publishes as a direct response to the evident levels of inconsistency in the sector.

- **Other legal tips.** Respondents also give useful tips for preparing immigration cases under conditions of high variability.
 - Agreeing with the opposing party as much as possible before entering the courtroom, and then saying to the judge that agreement has been reached, can pave the way to focussing on the most important issues (10US).
 - Preparing clients for courtroom behaviour and protocols, especially in situations when cultural habits and norms may differ greatly from their experiences, for example in terms of maintaining eye contact and not smiling (10US).
 - Keeping submissions such as affidavits to 10-12 pages can also help. As one US interviewee noted ‘They don’t need twelve articles from the New York Times about how [the country the applicant comes from] sucks. One State Department report is enough ... I just wanna give them what they need to prove the case and then be done... Don’t give them too much extra ‘cause that’s distracting’ (US136).



'Eye See You All Day' Iranian-born, former asylum seeker, and now London-based artist Aziz Anzabi.

Emotional Strain

We take 'emotional strain' to refer to both 'secondary trauma' and more general stress. In psychological terms, secondary trauma refers to the feelings which result from repeatedly hearing stories about the traumatic experiences of others and from experiencing another person's mental distress. However, emotional strain can also result from more indirect work with asylum-seekers: the feelings and symptoms of stress which result from undertaking work in pressurised environments, or being faced with the often overwhelming needs of clients on a daily basis. The symptoms of secondary trauma are often rapid, triggered by a specific event or encounter, whilst emotional strain might also result from a more gradual build-up of stress. Symptoms may include feeling afraid, depression and anxiety, fatigue and sleeping problems, intrusive and recurrent images of upsetting stories and events which are difficult to control and manage, as well as feelings of isolation or loss of empathy with client groups.

How big an issue is emotional strain?

Talking about the psychological demands of working with asylum seekers generated the most discussion during the interviews. A few respondents reacted negatively to the suggestion that workers and volunteers in the asylum support sector might suffer emotional strain describing such sentiments as a fad related to a wider 'therapy culture' (US1) and as an unhelpful form of introspection. Others expressed their doubts over whether the trauma of clients could have secondary impacts on asylum support workers. A majority, however, are in agreement that the emotional strain of working with asylum seekers in generally stressful working conditions and often in an emotionally intense and taxing environment can sometimes have serious consequences. Indeed, the experiences of asylum seekers can be so far removed from public purview that supporters inevitably experience a degree of isolation and feelings of helplessness when working with them.

The question of the psychological strain of working in this sector raises a series of challenges for organisations. Co-workers express unease that colleagues who are clearly under emotional pressure are difficult to care for because they often do not recognise

the stress they are under nor do they allow themselves the time and space needed to recover. Respondents also suggest that workers and volunteers who hear accounts of trauma first hand on a regular basis are most at-risk of suffering secondary trauma. This is especially the case if the client discloses self-harm or presents other psychological or physical symptoms of traumatic experiences, such as rape, war or torture, separation from or the deaths of friends and family members. Alongside the issue of emotional strain itself is the fact that many people involved with supporting asylum seekers do not want to talk about the emotional impact of such work with others. This is seen as partly the result of wanting to appear professional (particularly among lawyers) and partly as a result of not wanting to detract from the primary trauma of asylum seekers themselves. Overall, the view amongst respondents is that this was a hidden issue within the sector, which has not been addressed sufficiently.

Various factors compound the psychological strain of working in this area including the fact that the policy context is very slow to change. Those advocating in this area feel they have little impact on the lives of asylum-seekers despite hard campaigning. One US-based respondent described ‘that kind of overwhelming standing at the base of the Himalayas feeling’ that often accompanies asylum support work (50US). Also, a number of our respondents report the tendency to feel losses more acutely than victories. Lawyers are often ‘really torn up’ when they lose a case (45US), with one US-based respondent pointing out that ‘successes are brief and losses are eternal’ (US136). Another compounding factor is the fact that changes in legal status and in the location of detainees and asylum seekers often happen suddenly and key supporters are not informed about the whereabouts of asylum seekers that they are profoundly concerned about and may have formed deep emotional bonds with. Conversely, the emotive nature of support work in this sector can itself be a motivation. Respondents cite their personal and emotional investment as a strength which keeps them going. For some arts-based groups, the aim of their work is precisely to generate emotionally cathartic events that can serve as a release for asylum seekers in conditions of extreme stress.

What are the consequences of emotional strain in the asylum support sector?

It is important to recognise that emotional strain occurs and can have a series of negative consequences. Respondents discuss the nightmares that can result from close proximity to distressing cases, the difficulties facing supporters who ‘care too much’ (25UK) and have levels of empathy and understanding that can damage them personally, the burnout and loss of empathy that can result from prolonged exposure to emotionally demanding work and the loss of productivity and objectivity that can result from emotional strain.

A further costly consequence of emotional strain is the loss of people and expertise from the sector. Our respondents associate emotional strain with high employee and volunteer turnover. This is especially costly when the most experienced staff, who have built up specialist knowledge over long periods of service, feel unable to continue working in the sector (see Box 9).

9 One US-based respondent describes people ‘becoming jaded, cynical, brusque, not really having the patience to go to the meetings or tell your story one more time, or

Explain why asylum seekers aren’t the same as terrorists’ (US80).

How do organisations respond to emotional strain?

During our discussions about emotional strain, a range of possible responses to the issue emerged:

- **Educate workers, volunteers and students** who work to support asylum seekers about the symptoms of secondary trauma and stress, and some of the measures that are available to both individuals and organisations to mitigate the effects. Some of our volunteers draw upon knowledge about this issue from related sectors, such as people and groups who work with the victims of domestic violence and homelessness. Others look to specialist organisations and individuals, like medical associations and psychologists, to provide education and counselling for their staff. Our respondents also make use of their own, in-house, expertise in dealing with trauma that they have developed through working with asylum seekers.
- **Maintain variety in the roles that individuals perform.** This is possible through job rotation, which means that individuals in an organisation experience doing different aspects of organisations' work including revolving front-line work with 'back-office' work. Where the possibility of job rotation is constrained (perhaps because roles are highly skilled, or perhaps because the organisation is too small to accommodate much rotation), facilitating a focus on optimistic, success-oriented aspects of the work can be helpful.
- **Recognise that staff may feel negative emotions and devise productive channels for such emotions.** One cause of emotional strain is a sense of frustration that the system that subjects clients to harrowing experiences is drastically slow or resistant to change. Some of our interviewees recognise this feeling as a powerful advocacy, campaigning and activist tool. Some groups create organisational 'outrage books' for documenting situations and events that make them angry. What is evident is the importance of making sure that every member of staff has channels through which frustrations can be shared and documented. This documentation can, in turn, be used to contribute to advocacy, and campaigning, helping to strengthen the organisation as well providing a productive release for individuals.
- **Celebrate successes.** For many of our respondents there are moments of great joy in their work. Seeing individuals that they have supported become happier and more confident, or win asylee or refugee status, is a strong source of motivation. A few organisations systematically shared the successes of their colleagues by means of a weekly or monthly round-up of notable victories or via an actual or virtual organisational notice board.
- **Pair inexperienced staff with more experienced colleagues.** Some of our respondents run mentoring schemes that allow inexperienced and more junior colleagues to meet regularly with more experienced staff. Less experienced colleagues find it valuable to hear about some of the coping strategies that more experienced staff employ. Mentoring also helps more experienced staff to remember what got them interested in asylum support in the first place and rejuvenate their relationship with their own work.



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10 I do think we get run down. We need our holidays and make sure we get them (UK4).

- **Employ ‘rituals of release’.** A significant number of our interviewees describe what we have termed ‘rituals of release’ - routines and practices—often symbolic in nature—that are designed to allow staff to express and/or offload their frustrations and concerns. Examples range from ‘collective screaming’ following visits to detention centres, to building shrines or creating a space where staff can reflect on their work, to praying together regularly, during which time individuals can speak about their personal concerns, to religiously-informed centering exercises that have proven popular across various religions, to building a living sculpture to past and present clients. These activities are often specific to the character of individual organisations, many of which are culturally and spiritually unique. In each case these rituals create a space for staff to creatively express their frustrations.
- **Maintain flexible employment and volunteer contracts and expectations.** In a sector that is emotionally charged, people need to take regular breaks. Making sure that working hours, vacation allowances, and work-life balance policies are as supportive, flexible and accommodating as possible helps improve the morale of the organisation and may pay-off in the long-run by reducing burn-out and facilitating staff retention. Individuals we interviewed who had been working in support of asylum seekers for a long time speak appreciatively about the chance to ‘switch off’ and recommend that anyone new to the sector develop the ability to do so (see Box 10).
- **Consider whether your organisation could work more closely with other organisations to combat secondary trauma and/or stress.** One of our interviewees discusses how a group of attorneys formed to talk about secondary trauma and what they were experiencing on a regular basis. This does not involve expert input, but simply provides the opportunity for peer-to-peer support. This strategy needs to be accompanied by confidentiality agreements in order to create a safe and open environment for discussion.

Alternatively, organisations may benefit from other groups’ support for their staff. We note from our interviews that larger and more financially secure groups in the sector tend to be the ones who provide counselling opportunities and training for their staff while the smaller asylum support groups often cannot afford to do so. For example, some larger organisations have confidential helpline numbers their staff can call when they are experiencing problems. It may be the case that these in-house services can be extended to the staff of other, partner organisations, especially if existing facilities are currently underused.

Balancing Priorities

Our respondents consistently report that a key challenge of supporting asylum seekers is balancing the immediate needs of clients with the long term objectives of their organisations. Asylum support by its nature is crisis driven. Those being supported can face any number of personal emergencies related to the legal process, to welfare problems, including those brought on by delays in government processing systems, and related to health, housing and employment eligibility. Many groups feel that it is centrally important to maintain their capacity to respond to these immediate crises.

At the same time, however, there is recognition that long-term, strategic work is absolutely necessary, and this can give rise to tensions and dilemmas about where best to direct resources. Respondents recognise, in particular, the importance of long-term planning to maintain funding for their organisations. However, funding applications take time, and require the development of long-term organisational goals.

Responses to the challenge of balancing priorities

Our respondents offer two general approaches to the challenge of balancing priorities.

One approach is to emphasise the usefulness of doing **both** the strategic work and the everyday work of ‘putting out the fires’ (80US). In this vein one respondent who is a legal representative for asylum seekers observes that the two activities are strongly complementary. ‘Responding to the immediate needs and crises of individuals is exactly how you change asylum law’ (US5) they argue. This view accords with the view of other groups working outside a specifically legal context who emphasise the need for local, from-the-ground stories to animate national advocacy campaigns (see the section on connecting communities). With this in mind, some respondents call for greater appreciation for difference and diversity across the spectrum of organisations and groups that work to support asylum seekers. Their concern is that some groups that focus on long term objectives, such as ending detention, do not value the work of groups that focus on improving conditions within detention and vice-versa. They argue that the two are not mutually exclusive and call for more acceptance of difference across the activist landscape.

A second set of responses to the challenge of balancing priorities refers to steps that can be taken to ensure that organisations retain the space for thinking strategically and in a long-term way about the future despite their short-term commitments. These include:

- Retreats and away days for strategic planning
- Formalising and splitting roles within the organisation
- Setting aside a regular timeslot every week/month/year to have strategy meetings
- Developing an organisational statement of purpose that can be posted online or displayed in the office.

Dealing with the News Media

‘We are trying to combat simple lies with extremely complex and unwieldy truths’ (UK6).

Our respondents outline a variety of risks associated with dealing with the news media. For many, this means taking the view that the media should be avoided – the risks of working with it are simply too great (see Box Eleven). Respondents are in universal agreement that talking to journalists about specific cases is risk-laden. Respondents outline the ways in which:

- News media trivialise specific cases.
- Immigration Judges have reacted negatively to media coverage of cases.
- One respondent revealed that Homeland Security had ‘gone back and tried to dig up additional information on someone because they were [featured in a newspaper]... to try to discredit that person’ (50US).
- Even after a case is won, exposure in the news can negatively impact on family, friends and colleagues in the asylum seeker’s home country (see Box 11).
- Lack of media coverage can produce a more relaxed government and policy environment, which is more amenable to change.

It should be noted that the UK and US media climates are very different in the area of asylum and this impacts upon the perceived potential of working with the press in the two countries. While immigration fraud is considered news worthy in the US, our respondents feel that US press coverage is generally sympathetic to asylum seekers. America’s ideological history as a protector of those fleeing communism and religious persecution is cited as a factor that generates media and public sympathy for asylum seekers. The challenge in the US context is that the general public’s awareness of the issue of asylum is very rudimentary and often ill-informed, while coverage is infrequent. The press is seen as a way to educate people about asylum issues. One respondent identifies how asylum-seekers are often a group who can make a positive social and economic contribution to society, but felt this was rarely covered adequately in the press (see Box 12).

In the UK the press coverage of asylum issues is more frequent, but is also often very unsympathetic to the experiences of asylum seekers, and, indeed, generates hostility toward them. A number of our respondents understand a large part of their work – which involves visiting schools, youth groups and church groups – as repairing the damage that pejorative

11 ‘They say that working with the press is a double-edged sword,

I don’t think it is, I just think it is an extremely dangerous thing to do. I can’t see the benefit, it’s just too tricky. I can’t be putting my services in the way of any kind of danger just for the sake of issuing an interest story.’ (UK25)

12 ‘asylum seekers ... are people that you would be very happy to have in your country. I mean doctors, lawyers, journalists, artists, very educated. Some of them obviously aren’t but a lot of them are...

Anyone who can actually get to the US from [developing country] is automatically in the top one percent of their country.

These are all like go-getters.’ (US136)

depictions of asylum seekers in the press generates. What is more, even in sympathetic press coverage, respondents describe the way in which migrants and detainees are often depicted as powerless victims, which makes it difficult for the public, politicians and policy makers to feel a connection with asylum-seekers as individuals. In order to counter this, there is a perceived need to depict migrants as real human beings with real lives (see Box 13). It is this strategy of giving a 'human face' to the asylum seeking population that is seen by respondents as the best way to reach the 'undecided middle who have not firmly established opinions about migrants' (UK12) and avoid wasting time on press stories that will simply 'tickle our natural supporters' (UK6).

Because both US- and UK-based respondents recognise the potential gains, many advocate engaging with the news media, albeit within very tightly controlled parameters. These include:

- Empowering asylum seekers themselves to make decisions about whether they want to involve the press, and what the potential gains and losses might be. Some support organisations offer training sessions to prepare asylum seekers for involvement with journalists.
- Always consult at another level of the organisation before speaking with journalists and keep a careful check on what messages are being communicated.
- Insist on an agreement with members of the press that any articles or stories produced will be reviewed before publishing.
- Where possible train staff through media workshops, or instruct staff to turn to people with media training within their department before working with the press. Larger organisations may find that they are able to afford to train not only their own staff, but also other, smaller organisations who are interested.
- Decide well in advance of an interview what the talking points or key messages are that an organisation wants to get across. Stick to these and return to them frequently during an interview.
- Develop a confidentiality protocol that might include: no names, no photos, no country of origin data and a commitment to discussing cases only in a completely de-identified way.

13 'Hitting the general public over the head with the story of somebody else's trauma is not the best way...

The more outlandish the trauma that this person has gone through the harder it is for somebody to relate to' (UK12).

New Social Media

The proliferation of new social media (such as Facebook and Twitter) raises the question of how asylum support groups can make best use of new communications technologies. Our respondents outline the ways in which new social media are useful:

- They help promote their work to funders
- They generate momentum for campaign work (see Box 14).
- They establish a closer relationship and greater interaction with supporters
- They can aide asylum seekers in constructing their cases such as using evidence from online sources and for running their own anti-deportation campaigns
- They help to target younger audiences and potential supporters
- They are less costly and often reach a wider audience than paper-based campaigns (see Box 15)
- They help to increase co-operation with, and avoid duplication of, work by other asylum support organisations.

Along with these benefits, however, a significant number of our interviewees are sceptical about the gains new social media can offer. They argue that new social media can:

- **Create opportunities for inconsistency** in the accounts that asylum seekers present online and those submitted as part of their case. Our interviewees describe experiences where clients' cases were undermined by information that was made available online that did not tally with details given in their case.
- **Consume too much time.** Our respondents often feel that the requirement to blog or tweet regularly does not pay off in terms of increased exposure. Respondents explain that social media presence does not always translate into tangible actions or asylum support (50US). Organisations often find it necessary to forego social media updates in order to spend more time working with individual asylum seekers and pressing day-to-day matters (US 48).
- **Expose an organisation to racist remarks and vitriol.** The fact that online activities are often anonymous introduces the opportunity for groups and individuals that fundamentally disagree with the work of the sector to post 'mean and despicable things' (US41). It might be argued that every such posting represents an opportunity

14 'It has been very helpful for us as an organisation to have a media and social networking presence.

We've been able to pull in a lot more support that way especially with a lot of our campaigns' (US140).

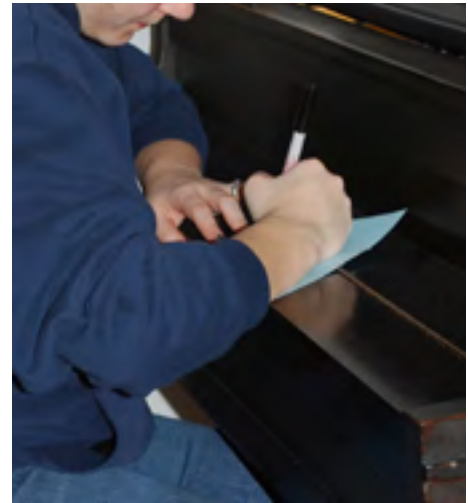
15 I think it is absolutely vital now because certainly the younger generation is using it.

Apart from anything else it is much cheaper than writing letters and less time consuming. One email out to hundreds of people. But sending out hundreds of letters?

We couldn't afford to do it apart from anything else. Not everybody reads their emails, but nobody reads their letters either! (UK4)

to re-educate that individual but our respondents are sceptical about the usefulness of spending their time in this way. Mindful of the fact that the client group is often highly stigmatized there is evidence of organisations disengaging from new social media due to the likelihood that they will encounter racism, or abusive and disparaging voices online.

- **Preach to the converted.** Some organisations note that a lot of their on-line connections are made up of groups and individuals that are either sympathetic to the work that they do or are involved in delivering very similar types of support. In this case, posting to like-minded email lists, for example, is seen as having limited impact, particularly with the general public.



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Given these sources of scepticism, our respondents felt in general that their work could be supported by social media, but that it was important to be clear about what precise objectives these mediums are being employed to pursue. When managed poorly, the risk is that social media can be very time consuming and yield very little in terms of progress towards the stated aims of an organisation. When managed well, however

- by being carefully selective about which types of social media serve an organisation's interests,
- by being prescriptive about who will be spending time working with social media, or
- by facilitating the use of social media by client groups on their own behalf

they can reap great dividends. Social media can increase the profile and connectedness of organisations and activities in a wide variety of contexts and in some circumstances allows asylum-seekers to become more involved in self-advocacy and assists in the development of peer support networks.

Conclusion

This report has outlined a number of the challenges that face the asylum support sector, many of which will be familiar to the readers of the report. Whilst the challenges are well known, we believe the responses, strategies, tactics and tips discussed here provide ideas that will be of interest and practical value to asylum seeker support organisations in the UK, the US and further afield.

Contacting people quoted in this report

We have promised anonymity to everyone who has been quoted in this report. If, however, there are organisations or ideas that you are particularly interested in contacting or following up, please contact us and we will approach our interviewees to ask them if they are willing to pass on their contact details to you.

Archiving

Our funders, the Economic and Social Research Council of the UK, aim to archive as much data as they can from the projects that they fund. At the time of releasing this report, we are anonymising all our transcripts by taking out all identifying information. We intend to contact interviewees to inquire whether or not they consent to the archiving of an anonymised copy of their interview. Archiving will mean that the transcripts will be available for the academic community. Researchers, students and teachers from any field, organisation or country may register with the archive and obtain data. When used for non-commercial purposes access is free. There are a number of advantages to archiving, including avoiding the duplication of research, listed at the intended archive site for this project, <http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/home>. If you would like to find out more about the anonymised transcripts, please contact us to discuss.

Staying in Touch

We hope that this document is the beginning of a conversation. If you have any responses to our findings then please do let us know. You can send comment and reactions to this report via our blog at www.asylum-network.com. Please also have a look at the site to see what others are saying. How about tweeting your response? If you do, please include us in your tweet ([@asylumresearch](https://twitter.com/asylumresearch)).

We need your feedback!

As with all funded projects, our funders are keen to know that the research they fund is value for money. In particular, they are keen to find out how the projects they fund impact communities outside academic settings. If you plan to introduce any of the ideas presented in this report to your organisation or to change any aspect of your current practice as a result of this report, **we need to know!**

We would also like to know how we can help support your work through future research. To this end, we ask you to complete a very brief feedback survey (ONLY FOUR QUESTIONS). Your feedback and comments are greatly appreciated. Link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/VW99BP9>.

Future projects

We are leading a group of university departments and centres in the development of a ‘research dating’ website to facilitate research with migrant support organisations. We know that migrant support groups get tired of being approached by academics for interviews or other data without having input into the research design process. Our website will allow migrant support organisations to enter their research needs online to inform and hopefully partner with undergraduate, Masters, PhD and professional academic researchers right at the beginning of the research process. This will facilitate the research and documentation needs of asylum and migrant support organisations while also enabling trained research students and academics to draw on the website in order to formulate practically-driven, needs-focused research questions. Presently we are putting together a funding bid for this initiative to our current funders, the ESRC.

The website will be updated regularly, interactive and informative with the inclusion of training materials, action packs and successful approaches in working effectively with academic organisations.

If you would like to be kept up-to-date or are interested in participating in this initiative, or if you’d like to hear about our future activities please do contact us, let us know your email address, and we can inform you as projects take shape.

Appendix One : The Questionnaire Survey (US Version)

THE SURVEY

(All your answers are confidential and any results or quotes will be kept anonymous)

Section 1: Background information

1 Please write the name of your organization here:

2 What country are you based in?

3 Which of the following best describes the geographic reach of your organization?

- ☐ Local ☐ National ☐ Regional ☐ International

Section 2: The work your organization does

4 How well do these statements describe the work that your organization does?

Please put a score from 0 (DOES NOT describe our work at all) to 10 (DOES describe our work perfectly) next to EACH statement.

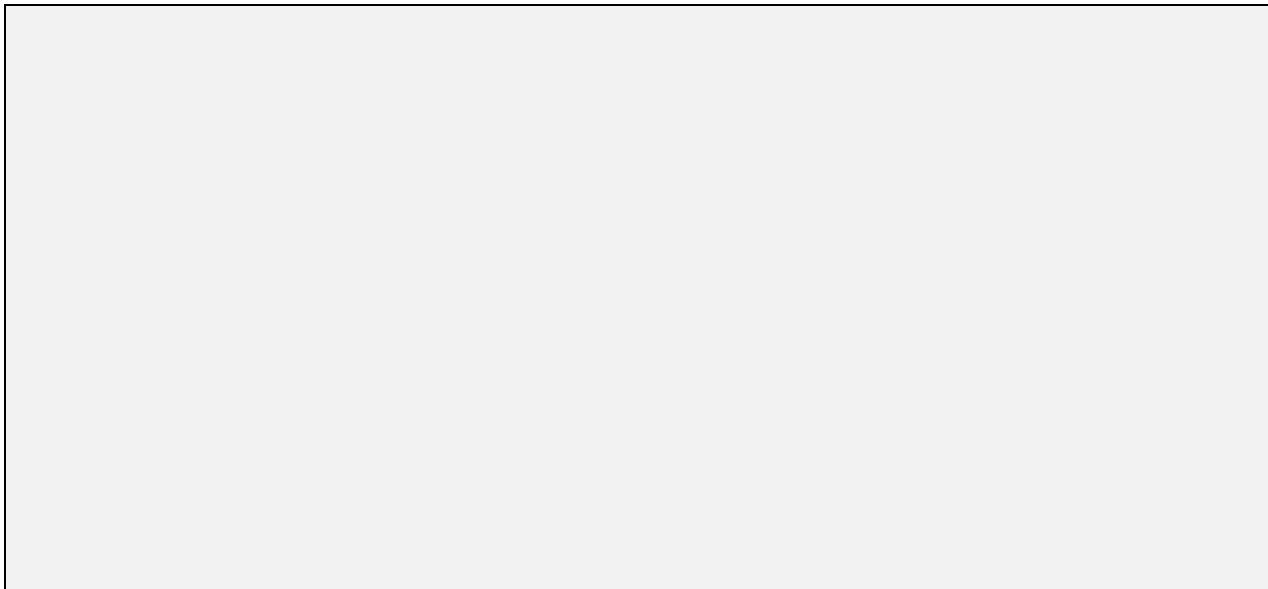
	Seeking or providing legal support
	Seeking to change policy or deciding upon policy that affects asylum seekers
	Visiting asylum seekers in detention or in the local community
	Providing services or information for asylum seekers (e.g. food or medical care)
	Using the arts or media as a means to raise the profile of asylum seekers
	Providing opportunities for asylum seekers to express themselves
	Campaigning
	Protesting
	Other? <i>(please specify)</i>

5 Are there employees in your organization with SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITY for any of the following *(check all that apply)*

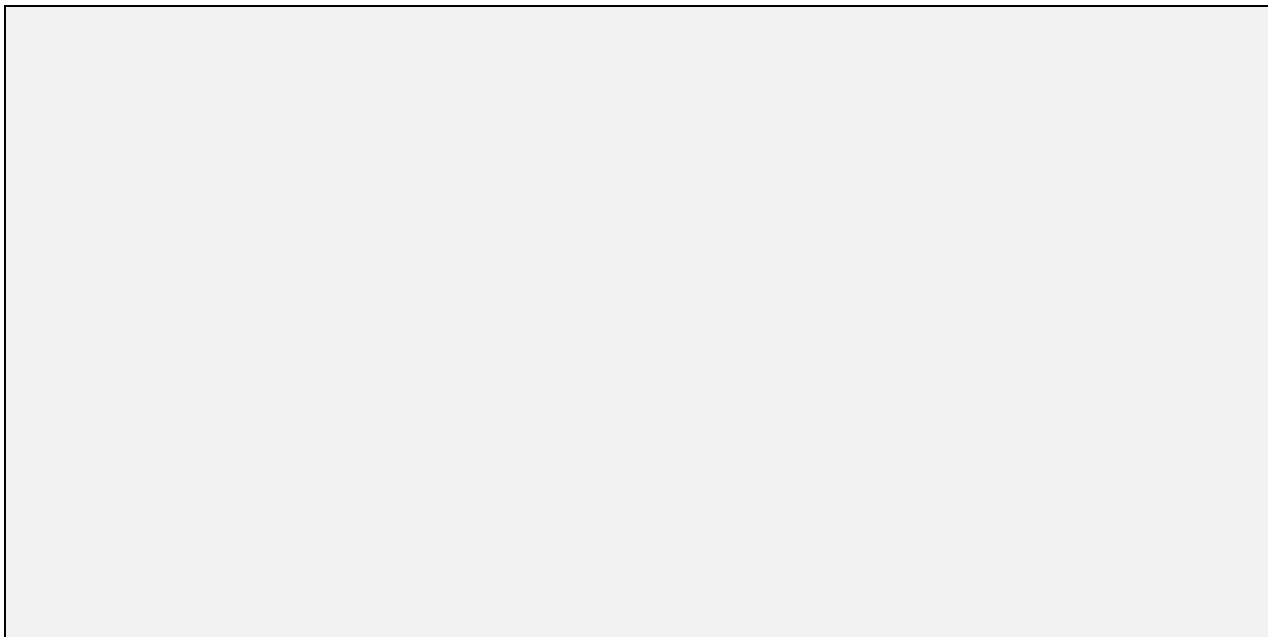
- ☐ Youth ☐ Education ☐ Events
- ☐ The elderly ☐ Health ☐ Public / media relations
- ☐ Gender ☐ Legal advice ☐ Political lobbying / campaigning
- ☐ Fundraising ☐ Other job roles? *(please specify)*

This is a central part of our research and we would be very grateful if you could write in as much detail as possible

6 What are some of the successes your organization has had in working on behalf of asylum seekers?



7 Please briefly describe what you see as the most important challenges facing your organization:



- 8 What kinds of resources / knowledge would be most valuable to your organization to enable them to address this challenge?

- 9 To what extent would you say your organization is motivated by the following?

Please put a score from 0 (*DOES NOT describe our motivation at all*) to 10 (*DOES describe our motivation perfectly*) next to EACH statement.

<input type="text"/>	Faith-based motivations	<input type="text"/>	Shared identity with asylum seekers
<input type="text"/>	Human rights	<input type="text"/>	Political motivations
<input type="text"/>	Other (please specify)		

- 10 How has recent immigration legislation (such as SB-1070 and 287g) impacted your organization's work and that of other asylum advocacy organizations you're familiar with?

- 11 How is the Government viewed within your organization?

Please put a score from 0 (*DOES NOT describe how the Government is viewed*) to 10 (*DOES describe perfectly how the Government is viewed*) next to EACH statement.

<input type="text"/>	The Government should be distrusted
<input type="text"/>	The Government should be resisted
<input type="text"/>	We work with the Government because we have to, but we don't like it
<input type="text"/>	We try to co-operate with the Government wherever possible
<input type="text"/>	We support the Government
<input type="text"/>	We are seeking to reform the Government
<input type="text"/>	Other (please specify)

- 12 Please list other organizations you have a working relationship with, indicating the nature of that relationship:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

Section 3: Information about your organization

- 13 What percentage of your organization's time is devoted to working with asylum seekers, or on their behalf?**

0%

☐

1-25%

☐

26-50%

☐

51-75%

☐

76-100%

☐

- 14 What is the annual budget of your organization? (Please estimate if necessary)**

\$

15

Where does this funding come from?

☐ Employees and volunteers

☐ Individual donors

Other? *(please specify)*

☐ Charities or foundations

☐ Government

16

How many people are employed by your organization?

- 17 How many of your employees are asylum seekers or former asylum seekers? (Estimate if necessary)**
-

- 18 How many people volunteer for your organization? (Estimate if necessary)**
-

- 19 What percentage of volunteers are asylum seekers or former asylum seekers? (Estimate if necessary) %**
-

Section 4: The asylum seekers you work with

- 20 What percentage of those served by your organization are currently in immigration detention (mark only one)?**

0-1%

☐

2-25%

☐

26-50%

☐

51-75%

☐

76-100%

☐

- 21 What is the average age of the asylum seekers you work with (mark only one)?**

0-17

☐

18-40

☐

41-64

☐

65+

☐

All ages

☐

Do not know

☐

- 22 Which of the following best describes the gender balance between the asylum seekers you work with (mark only one)?**

☐ All female

☐ More female than male

☐ Roughly equal male and female

☐ All male

☐ More male than female

☐ Other *(please specify)*

- 23 Where do the asylum seekers you work with come from? (Please list up to four of the most common countries).**

- 1) _____ 3) _____
 2) _____ 4) _____

24 Please list your main sources of information for matters related to:

Laws / changes in legislation:

Asylum facts and figures:

Government funded resources for asylum seekers:

Charitable and other resources for asylum seekers:

Please list your main sources of information for matters related to:

Campaigns and action alerts:

Funding sources:

Section 5: Continuing our research

25 Are there any other asylum organizations that you think would complete this questionnaire? If so, please provide names and contact details (if available).

26 Please check the appropriate boxes below:

Would you be willing to participate in a follow-on interview with one of our researchers about your activities?

(Interview can be completed over the phone or in person and takes approx. 45 mins).

☐ Yes ☐ No

Would you like to receive a written summary of our research findings?

☐ Yes ☐ No

(if you answered YES to either, please fill in question 27 below)

27 Who is the best person in your organization to contact for a follow-up interview or to send further information to?

Name

Address

Email

Telephone number(s)



Thank you very much for taking part in the research!

Please mail this survey, along with one copy of the consent form, in the stamped envelope provided, to:

Deirdre Conlon, Ph.D., Department of Urban Studies, Saint Peter's College, , 51 Glenwood Ave, Room 404A, Jersey City, NJ 07306

Tel: (001) 201 761-6159 Email: dconlon@spc.edu

Appendix Two: The interview Schedule

This sheet provides information about the **topics** and **questions** I hope we can address during our 45-minute interview. We are particularly interested in hearing about *strategies* and *responses* your organization has developed in relation to the topics below as well as *advice for success* you might be able to offer to other advocacy groups. If your schedule allows, please review this document ahead of our conversation and feel free to let me know if there are specific questions you are especially interested in discussing.

1. Asylum Issues and Organization Response

A number of events such as changes in the law and publication of reports have affected asylum seekers in the past couple of decades. We're interested to hear how your organization responded to these issues. There are a few examples to help below, please review, include other significant issues/events that have shaped your work, and indicate how your organization has responded.

- **1980** – *Refugee Act*
- **1996** - *Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act* – expedited removal and one-year filing deadline introduced
- **2003** – *Department of Homeland Security* takes over INS functions, oversees immigration under auspices of USCIS, ICE and BCBP
- **2005** - *US Commission on International Religious Freedom* – Report released on Asylum Seekers in Expedited Removal
- **2007** – *Hutto Settlement* – establishes minimum conditions for families in detention
- **2007** - ICE introduction of new parole guidelines for asylum seekers in detention
- **2009** - DHS announces plans to reform ICE immigrant detention system
- **2010** – Senate hearing on *Refugee Protection Act S3113*

Date	Issue/Event	Response

2. Movement of Asylum Seekers and Timeframe for Claims

Asylum seekers who are detained are often moved from one location to another for various reasons. How has your organization responded to this situation and the challenges it presents? How has the one-year time limit for asylum claims impacted your work?

3. Legal Representation

Is your organization involved in providing pro bono legal representation, legal orientation programs or other forms of legal support to asylum seekers? Under what conditions do (or can) these programs work most (or least) effectively?

4. Emotional Impact of Advocacy work with Asylum Seekers

How does your organization navigate the emotional implications of working with and advocating on behalf of asylum seeking communities? What do you do to keep motivations high and momentum strong?

5. Specific Strategies Organizations Use

Organizations use a range of advocacy strategies; do you see your organization as occupying a particular position within the asylum sector? What strategies are most effective in the work your organization does? How do you balance every day crises against long term strategic goals?

6. Advocacy Group Networks

We'll review the groups your organization works with and identify additional ones. How are these connections established initially, what are the challenges and risks of working closely with other organizations, if any? What advice can you offer to organizations that want to network more effectively with other organizations?

7. Media and Public Perceptions

What do you see as the dominant popular perception of asylum seekers in the US and how does this impact upon your organization? Under what circumstances do the press make things worse for asylum seekers? Have you had experience of this? Do you have any advice for advocacy groups approaching the press with an asylum seeker's story?

8. Use of New Communications Technologies by Organizations

How, if at all, has your organization adopted new communications and new media technologies? Where have you seen the greatest impact in using new media? What are the downsides of new media in your experience?

9. Current Economic Climate's Impact for Asylum Seeker Advocacy Sector

Have you experienced any differences in your work as a result of changes in the economic climate recently? What sort of advice might you offer to organizations facing cuts in their funding?

Appendix Three: Survey Methodological Notes

The closed survey questions were divided into ones that asked about the background of the responding organisation, the work that the organisation does, the responding organisation's client base and some additional information about the aims, objectives and make-up of the groups. The open survey questions, of which there were three, included questions about the most important successes and challenges that the respondent organisation had achieved and faced (for a copy of the questionnaire see Appendix One). The questionnaire yielded rich quantitative and qualitative data. An excel spreadsheet of 138 rows*63 columns was produced, and over 40 sides of written responses were received.